"No Greater Love" Rescues Take Place in Iowa

by David J. Shedlock

Des Moines/Windsor Heights, IA — Operation Rescue Iowa closed down the offices of two abortionists in three days in what rescuers called a special tribute to the martyr/rescuer, St. Valentine, beheaded for his faith on February 14 in the third century. David Shedlock, communications director for the group, stated that rescuers were asked to focus on the Scripture, "Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

On Thursday, February 18, at approximately 9 a.m., about a dozen Christians entered Planned Parenthood of Greater Iowa in Des Moines. Seven of them were attached at the arms inside pipes composed of heavy stainless steel, PVC plastic, duct tape, chicken wire and "artificial turf-type" material. "We tried a lot of our extrication equipment," stated Fire Capt. Larry Hockersmith. "We even tried a hydraulics spreader but it didn't work very well."

Shedlock referred to the fire department personnel as "unrescue workers," and condemned the efforts to open up the killing center by removing the rescuers.

"This was the longest ever," according to Rick Brannan, referring to the four hours the center was kept closed. His wife was among those arrested. This location has been the target of about 10 other rescues. Approximately 75 abortions are committed each week here, according to Planned Parenthood statistics. Those piped together were arrested on charges of trespass and interference; two others were arrested for "loafing and loitering."

Rescuers lay back & forth locked together with pipes and tape.

Within hours, Judge Glen Pille granted a temporary injunction attempting to prevent future rescues. In addition, six of those who participated are facing sentencing on March 5 for a similar rescue that took place on October 29, 1992. In March of 1991, rescue director, Judy Maki, broke a similar injunction and spent 37 days in jail.

Forty-eight hours after the Planned Parenthood rescue, about two dozen people entered the offices of Herbert Ivan Remer in suburban Windsor Heights in order to prevent abortions. According to Kay Stroh, Remer does abortions through "at least 23 weeks" for about $1,000. Several rescuers successfully locked themselves with reinforced bike locks in spite of interference by the abortionist, who assaulted one rescuer, and his wife, who was caught on videotape throwing herself at the rescuers and pulling on their necks. Remer himself is facing assault and criminal mischief charges for an incident last fall when he struck Shedlock and did damage to his car.

Iowans lock in at the Remer Abortuary in Windsor Heights.

Although only closed for about an hour, all customers were seen leaving with reports that "only one or two" were seen returning. Many of the 50 sidewalk counselors and prayer supporters remained near the premises until 2:30p.m. This was the first such incident at this site. Shedlock stated that he "has never been more encouraged by the increasing number of people willing to help" with the rescues.

"We have a legal business in which we are taking care of people and their needs," complained Remer.

"People are dying here. Why doesn't anybody care about that?" responded supporter Margaret Rees, one of those arrested in the October rescue. ■

Gate Lock Rescue Brings Felony Charges

by Roxanne McKnight

San Antonio, TX—Felony charges were filed against four rescuers who locked themselves to the entrance gate of Reproductive Services' San Antonio location early Saturday morning, March 13. The men used bicycle locks around either their necks or ankles as well as extra locks around both ends of the gate. The tall chain link fence topped with barbed wire was erected only a month prior to the rescue, purportedly in response to vandalism against the single structure building. Clinic employees claim that acid has been poured through holes drilled in the roof, that the door locks have been superglued, and that nails have been spread over the parking lot. Rescuers were delighted by the fence since the number of entrances to block is now only one—the gate—rather than the four entrances to the building.

Mary Beth

San Antonio firemen prepare to use "Jaws of Life" to unlock rescuers.

"The beauty of it," said one pro-lifer, "is that those sitting in front of the gate are still on public property."

The first clinic employee to arrive at the rescue site, security guard Bonnie Cavazos, was unable to enter the property since the gate locks were already in place. While the guard called police, four men locked themselves to the gate, and four other men sat among them, huddling under blankets to keep warm during the extreme temperature of an unseasonable cold wave.

Local policemen arrived within minutes, and initially closed the entire street, setting flares on both sides of the clinic, and denying motorists access to the area. Eventually, the SWAT team was called, then the San Antonio Fire Department, which brought the "Jaws of Life" to cut the Kryptonite locks. After cutting the two locks off the gate itself, they began trying to cut the lock off rescuer John Gallagher. Knowing the special tool would quickly cut the locks, and allow the killing to begin inside the clinic, Gallagher reached out with his free hand and pulled hard on a strategic wire. The machine was disabled, but the ensuing shower of sparks caught his jacket on fire. Fortunately, disaster was averted as he was able to put out the smoking fabric with his free hand. A policeman grabbed his hand, pulled it behind Gallagher's back and began pulling the fingers backward. Eventually, Gallagher began crying out loudly in pain.

THE ENSUING SHOWER OF SPARKS CAUGHT HIS JACKET ON FIRE...

A short distance from the struggle, prolifer Debbie Locander was counseling a client waiting in a car with a companion. The young customer accepted literature and began rolling up the window, when Gallagher's screams riveted both of them.

"What was that, what's going on?" the girl asked. Locander's eyes filled with tears as she wondered whether the screams were those of her husband, who was one of the rescuers.

"Like I've been telling you," she told her, "it's a life or death situation—my husband and several other men are risking their lives and their freedom to rescue you and your baby."

The girl rolled her window down again, picked up the pro-life packet and asked, "Where did you say this other place was?"

Ten minutes later a second fire truck arrived with another Jaws of Life tool. This time, instead of cutting the locks, the firemen cut the gate itself, allowing the locks to slip off easily. The eight men were arrested and jailed on charges of criminal mischief and criminal trespass. Once the gate was opened, the clinic staff and several clients drove onto the property. A number of others, who had left after being counseled, were not observed to return.

Reproductive Services claimed the repair to the gate would cost $800, just over the $750 minimum which would classify the charges as a felony. However, professionals estimated the repairs at closer to $100. Attorney John Haring, who has defended pro-life rescuers since 1985, does not believe the felony charges will stand up in court.

Roxanne McKnight

Locked rescuers huddle beneath blankets as police warn them to leave.

"The fact that the firemen chose to cut the gate rather than the locks affects the validity of the criminal mischief charge," he said, "as well as the cost for repairs being lower than $750. Since they were on public property, the criminal trespass charges will probably be changed before they go to trial."

The last of the eight rescuers was released March 10, three days after the rescue. ■